

FORM B – BUILDING

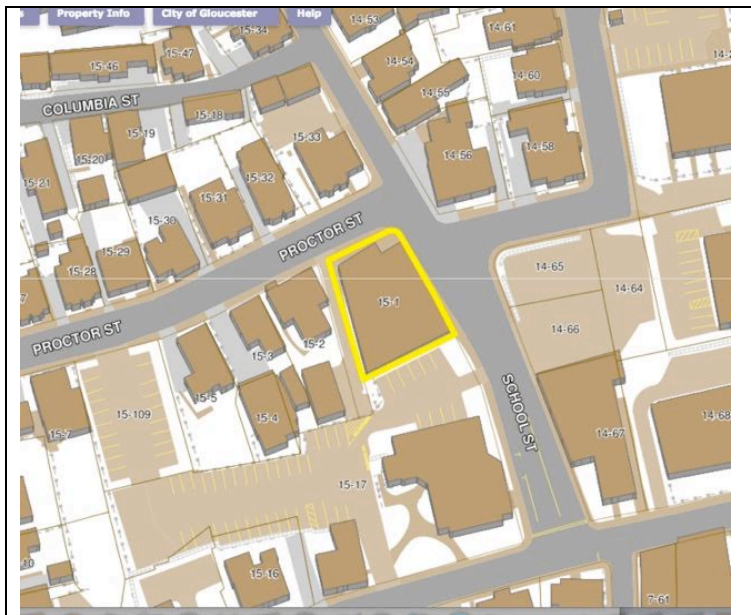
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



East (façade) and north elevations

Locus Map



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero and Kathleen K. Broomer

Organization: Gloucester Historical Commission

Date (month / year): d r a f t – June 2016

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

15-1			GLO.
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Town/City: Gloucester

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Downtown

Address: 8 School Street

Historic Name: Central Fire Station

Uses: Present: fire station

Original: fire station

Date of Construction: 1925

Source: cornerstone

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: George Ernest Robinson, architect;
John J. Bowes, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: brick with granite and cast stone trim

Roof: tar & gravel / rubber

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
Replacement windows (L 20th c?)

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.16 acres

Setting: Densely built residential/institutional neighborhood developed chiefly in the 19th century. Surrounded mainly by wood frame, single- and two-family houses, near churches, library, and city hall.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GLOUCESTER

8 SCHOOL STREET

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☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Central Fire Station occupies a small, flat, trapezoidal lot at the corner of Proctor and School streets. The late 20th century building of Trinity Congregational Church is located immediately to the south; the Sawyer Free Library is located across School Street; and the City Hall, former Central Grammar School (now apartments), and several other ecclesiastical buildings are located within two blocks of the site, on Middle and Dale streets. The Main Street commercial district is located two blocks to the south. The fire station occupies virtually all of the parcel's footprint, with no setbacks from the adjacent streets. A paved asphalt driveway (belonging mainly to the adjacent residential building) abuts the building to the west, and a paved surface parking lot (belonging to Trinity Church) is located adjacent to the south side of the fire station.

The trapezoidal building is shaped to fit its site, with a small recessed corner at the intersection of Proctor and School streets to accommodate a pedestrian entrance. Central Fire Station rises two stories from a raised basement to a flat roof. The School Street portion of the building is taller than the rear section. Exterior walls are clad with brick and trimmed with granite and cast stone. The School and Proctor street elevations feature a granite base, Flemish bond brick pattern, and a tall parapet with cast stone coping. The west (rear) and south elevations have a cast stone base, upper walls in a running bond with a row of Flemish bond every sixth course, and a lower roofline with plain copper coping. Window openings are rectangular with double-hung replacement sash; they are typically taller on the first floor than on the second. Windows on the School Street façade are paired, while the side and back elevations have single windows in a variety of sizes.

The School Street (east) façade contains five bays framed by brick piers with granite bases and cast stone at the capitals and full entablature. Modern garage doors access the vehicular bays on the ground floor, which are each surmounted by a high, flat, gauged brick lintel with an attenuated cast stone keystone. (An historic photo shows the original or early vehicular doors to have been double leaf and segmentally arched, with glass panes.) A small copper light fixture is centered on each of the interior piers; these also appear in the historic photo. On the second floor, brick mullions separate paired windows with continuous cast stone sills in each bay. The heavy entablature contains an architrave, frieze, dentil course, and projecting cornice; the name and date of the building are incised in the frieze band. The parapet steps up to the center and is finished with cast stone coping.

The easternmost bay of each side elevation features a cast stone string course extending from the architrave of the front entablature. The Proctor Street elevation is distinguished by the main pedestrian entrance, which is sheltered by a long shed roof with slate cladding and heavy-timber brackets. A second, utilitarian entrance accesses a stairway near the center of this elevation, which contains regular but asymmetrical fenestration. The west (rear) elevation contains ten irregularly set bays of windows, two paneled wood doors in pedestrian entrances near Proctor Street, and a vehicular entrance in its southernmost bay. The south elevation features paired windows on each floor of the front bay, and five regularly arrayed windows on each floor in the rear portion of the building.

Central Fire Station is a handsome, well-detailed example of the Classical Revival style and of early 20th century civic architecture in Gloucester. The major alteration is the replacement of original window sash and vehicular doors. The building is notable for its prominent corner location, monumental façade, and Craftsman-influenced main pedestrian entrance.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GLOUCESTER

8 SCHOOL STREET

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Serving as the city's Fire Department headquarters since its dedication 1 November 1926, Central Fire Station is the oldest of four extant fire stations in Gloucester; other stations are located at West Gloucester, Bay View, and Magnolia. The previous fire station on this site was of wood-frame construction and dated to at least 1888, an era when a fire station was known as a fire barn or wagon house. This modern headquarters building was of fireproof construction (brick, pressed steel, and concrete), a significant development in the city's fire-fighting history. Homer R. Marchant, Chief of the Gloucester Fire Department at the time of construction, was said to be "in constant apprehension that some harm would happen" to the city's fire alarm system housed in the old wood-frame building. Alderman Harry G. Pew was chairman of the committee on the Fire Department. Gloucester builder John J. Bowes was the contractor, and city electrician Henry J. Burke installed the electrical apparatus.

Architect of the Central Fire Station was George Ernest Robinson (1888-1945), who designed a range of municipal and residential buildings but promoted himself as a specialist in fire station design. A 1911 graduate of the architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Robinson resided in Belmont and based his architecture firm in Boston. Gloucester's Central Fire Station is among the earliest of Robinson's fire stations identified to date. He was a frequent speaker at meetings of firemen's associations, and both firemen's and architects' journals published his writings and news of his commissions. Robinson's fire stations typically were designed in the Colonial Revival or Classical Revival styles, and his reputation for fire station design expanded in the 1930s and 1940s. Between 1925 and 1941, he designed several stations from the Boston area to Plainfield, New Jersey, most notably Central Fire Station in Arlington (1926, ARL.593); the Fire Headquarters in Amesbury (1926, AME.28); Central Fire Station in Ayer (1934, AYE.176); and four fire stations in Quincy (Central Fire Station plus neighborhood stations at West Quincy, Squantum, and Quincy Point) [Stott, Find a Grave; MACRIS].

Upon opening in 1926, Gloucester's fire headquarters housed eight motorized vehicles, including two pump trucks, one aerial ladder truck, a "city service" truck, a chemical truck, chief's car, hose wagon, and a squad wagon. A telephone station at the northeast corner of the building received calls for assistance and transmitted them to sirens and gongs at various points in the city, alerting residents that the fire apparatus was approaching. A machine shop occupied the building's southwest corner, and the hose tower was rigged with a special apparatus for hanging hoses designed by Chief Marchant. Dormitory spaces on the second floor included sleeping quarters for twenty-one firemen, plus officers' rooms with emergency sleeping quarters for the chief and deputy; along with a reading room, smoking room, assembly room, cooking and bathing facilities, and offices. Fire chiefs from the North Shore to Worcester attended the dedication, and an estimated 15,000 individuals toured the new station that day, including about 2,600 school children.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



North and west elevations

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible
- ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district
- ☐ Contributing to a potential historic district
- ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ **A** ☐ **B** ☒ **C** ☐ **D**

Criteria Considerations: ☐ **A** ☐ **B** ☐ **C** ☐ **D** ☐ **E** ☐ **F** ☐ **G**

Statement of Significance by

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.